



LEROY D. BACA, SHERIFF

County of Los Angeles
Sheriff's Department Headquarters
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January 7, 2004

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
 County of Los Angeles
 383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
 Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

This letter serves as a response to the motion by Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich (requested at the meeting of November 25, 2003, Syn. #53-B) which assigned the Office of Emergency Management and the County Fire Department responsibility to work with the Sheriff's Department to explore the uses of HAM radio operators during emergencies.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Emergency Operations Bureau administers the Los Angeles County Disaster Communications Service (LACDCS) which is a County volunteer group made up of approximately 950 amateur radio operators. These volunteers are organized and assigned to 18 districts throughout the County. Many cities have organized these HAM groups of amateur radio operators. Members of these groups are required to maintain a concurrent membership with the LACDCS, which coordinates their use in an organized mutual aid system and standardizes their training.

The primary mission for these trained radio operators is to supply back-up and auxiliary communications for the City EOC's (Emergency Operations Center), sheriff stations, fire stations, and the County EOC. When the main forms of communications fail or become overloaded due to unforeseen circumstances, these volunteers use County and privately owned amateur radios to deliver valuable information to the command staff in these various command centers. Members are offered additional training in traffic control by the California Highway Patrol and fire department radio procedures by the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

These volunteers are also utilized to support many of the Sheriff's, Fire Department, City Police, and other County departments' emergency and non-emergency events; such as, community parades, open houses, and door-to-door searches for missing children. When needed, they also assist the American Red Cross volunteers to relieve their heavy workload.

A Tradition of Service

The Honorable Board of Supervisors

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During the recent fires in Los Angeles County, many of the LACDCS volunteers were activated and reported to their local sheriff's station, fire station, or city departments. When requested, these volunteers are asked to report to the Sheriff's and Fire Department's mobile command posts to assist in the field. Many times during past emergencies, these volunteers were paired up with deputies to assist with traffic control and other non-hazardous law enforcement duties.

There have been discussions with the volunteer staff members to reorganize and improve the services provided by the volunteers. Additional training in disaster preparedness, search and rescue, and first aid training is being planned for the members.

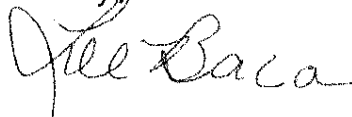
Other uses for these valuable volunteer resources include:

- A new team of volunteers is being developed to work alongside the Sheriff's Department Operations Center's (DOC) Logistics Section (Personnel) to coordinate the deployment of these volunteers. This will ensure that the County departments are aware that volunteers are available to be placed where they can provide additional resources and support.
- Additionally, LACDCS has a HAM radio station located at the County Fire Communications Headquarters and at the Battalion Headquarters. These stations are staffed when the Fire Department requests communications assistance.

The LACDCS Fire Department liaison volunteer has been in contact with the County Fire Deputy Chief Michael Dyer to explore better training, support, and utilization of the volunteers. The Office of Emergency Management has supported the LACDCS group for many years and has utilized these volunteers in many past County disasters.

These departments will continue to further develop the capabilities of the LACDCS volunteers for use during emergencies.

Sincerely,



LEROY D. BACA
SHERIFF